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Rendering to God and Caesar: Critical Readings for American Government

Mark Caleb Smith

Cedarville University, mcsmith@cedarville.edu

Jewerl Maxwell

Cedarville University, jmaxwell@cedarville.edu

Marc A. Clauson

Cedarville University, clausonm@cedarville.edu

Kevin F. Sims

Cedarville University, simsk@cedarville.edu

David L. Rich

Cedarville University, richd@cedarville.edu

See next page for additional authors

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Mark Caleb Smith, Jewel Maxwell, Marc A. Clauson, Kevin F. Sims, David L. Rich, and Andrew Travis

THE MAYFLOW COMPACT

1620

There is much known about the Pilgrims, their journey, and their hardships. Landing at the tip of Cape Cod instead of their intended Virginia, the settlers were forced to make a decision about how they were going to coexist. While they had permission from the King to settle in a different location, landing here, and staying, compelled them to form their own body politic, which they did. The male passengers signed the following document, binding themselves together and, in a sense, making the colony more democratic than their homeland.

In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c. Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honor of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the first Colony in the northern Parts of Virginia; Do by these Presents, solemnly and mutually, in the Presence of God and one another, covenant

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and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid: And by Virtue hereof do enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions, and Officers, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general Good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due Submission and Obedience. IN WITNESS whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape-Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth, Anno Domini; 1620.